

**Department of Health and Human Services**  
**Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee**  
**December 13-14, 2010**  
**Washington, DC**

**Executive Summary**

The inaugural meeting of the Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee (STAC) was convened on December 14 to formalize the committee's charter, to elect a STAC Chair and Co-chair, and to begin to provide guidance to and set priorities for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to improve the health of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Secretary Sebelius told delegates that the STAC reflected the Department's and the Obama Administration's commitment to honor and improve the Government-to-Government relationship. She charged the STAC with identifying key challenges in Indian Country and with proposing steps to eliminate barriers, improve services, and close the glaring health disparities gap facing American Indians and Alaska Natives.

STAC members held a wide-ranging discussion with the Secretary and other senior HHS officials about the challenges facing Indian Country and possible areas of focus to improve the overall health of American Indians and Alaska Natives. There were two overarching issues: (1) funding and budget constraints; and (2) State-Tribal relationships.

Regarding funding, a number of delegates expressed concern about the budget landscape and the fact that health care in Indian Country has been underfunded for decades. There was also concern that State funding constraints will lead to further cuts in critical services. Regarding State-Tribal relationships, there was considerable frustration expressed about barriers to access as well as concerns that Tribes are often dependent on States to provide funding that is intended for Indian Country. Delegates also cited the need for HHS to provide more direction to the States in how they work with Tribes as well as to put in place stronger enforcement mechanisms.

STAC members also offered a number of specific recommendations and areas of possible focus:

- Defining what a Healthy Tribal Community would look like, and then developing a roadmap for HHS with specific actionable measures to take to begin to achieve this.
- Providing guidance to HHS on implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

- Providing guidance to HHS on implementation of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.
- Improving collaboration on Indian health across the Federal Government.
- Eliminating barriers to access to care.
- Eliminating administrative barriers to creating integrated, comprehensive Tribal health programs administered by Tribes with Federal support.
- Creating a one-stop shop for all HHS information about funding and grants information.
- Developing a list of Federal agency resources outside HHS that might be tapped to further the goal of a Healthy Tribal Community.
- Providing technical expertise around grant applications and grants management.
- Creating a one-stop application process for Tribal families seeking help (rather than having to apply agency by agency).
- Addressing data issues (including data collection and sharing of data).
- Improving the coordination of Tribal workgroups across HHS.
- Developing a matrix of recommendations from previous HHS and agency-specific Tribal consultation processes, Tribal leaders' testimony, and other information to guide the STAC's work.
- Allowing Tribes to establish best practices (e.g., in the area of mental health services), as well as looking at best practice models in place elsewhere.
- Exploring co-location of facilities and services.
- Improving care for infants and children (including focusing on environmental issues impacting their health).
- Improving care for older Americans.

STAC delegates also discussed next steps—and how to narrow the list to a few targeted, actionable recommendations that HHS can tackle in 2011 and 2012. Delegates agreed to finalize their draft priorities on a conference call in mid-January, after which they would have an opportunity to consult with and solicit input from Tribal leaders and Tribal communities in their regions. The STAC will take a final vote on the priorities after the Tribal Budget Consultation in early March.

The formal STAC meeting was preceded by a one-day working meeting at which delegates heard from senior leaders across HHS about their programs and what their operating divisions are doing to address Tribal health and human service needs and priorities.